

News Items and Public Crime Summary for Week Ending June 26, 2010

Curacao – Constitution Vote Lacks Two-Thirds Majority Support; Elections in August?

The Curacao Island Parliament vote for the new Curacao Constitution did not garner the mandatory two-thirds majority on Friday. Changes to the Constitution require a two-thirds majority support in the legislature. The PAR/PNP/FOL coalition (11 of 21-seats) and Aldebert Rooijer of NPA voted in favor; the rest of the opposition against. Rooijer, at the same time, broke ties with his party and will reportedly continue as an independent Island Parliament member. After elections (August 27?) a simple majority suffices to pass the stalled legislation. The coalition fears the 10-10-10 target is in serious jeopardy, because the final Kingdom Round Table Conference, prior to dissolving, is scheduled for September 9. (Various media)

Aruba – Van Der Sloot Retracts Murder Confession

A Dutch newspaper that interviewed Joran van der Sloot in his prison cell reported Monday that he has retracted his confession in the killing of a young woman in Peru. According to the De Telegraaf, Van der Sloot said he only signed papers admitting killing Stephany Flores because he was intimidated during interrogation and had been promised he would be transferred to the Netherlands. He claimed he had been "tricked" into confessing.

"I was really scared during the interrogations, I was confused and just wanted it to end" he told the newspaper. "They kept telling me, 'If you sign these papers you'll be extradited to the Netherlands'.

Van der Sloot is the main suspect in Flores' May 30 killing in a Lima hotel, exactly 5 years after the still unsolved disappearance of U.S. teen Natalee Holloway on Aruba. Both women were last seen alive in his company.

He has several times given and retracted admissions of involvement in Holloway's disappearance. (Various media)

Curacao – New York-Based IIG Capital LLC Purchases Giro Bank

IIG TOF Holdings N.V. is reportedly the new owner of the Giro Bank. Venezuelan owner Victor Gill agreed to sell his shares to a group which consists of New York-based International Investment Group IIG Capital LLC and the Trade Opportunities Fund. The new managing partners are U.S. citizen Martin Silver, David Hu, and the current director Eric Garcia.

IIG Capital LLC provides international merchants, traders and processors with alternative forms of short-term financing for qualified trade-related and commercial finance transactions. (Various media)

Curacao – FATF Case Study Trade Based ML/BMPE at FreeZone

The Financial Action Task Force released a “Money Laundering Vulnerabilities of Free Trade Zones” report in March 2010

<http://www.fatf-gafi.org/dataoecd/45/47/44888058.pdf>. The Curacao Kings Cross Investigation was used as a case study example of Trade Based Money Laundering/Black Market Peso Exchange.

The Kings Cross investigation, as it is called, demonstrates a connection between organized crime and transactions involving a company based in the Free Zone in Curacao. The investigators discovered a variant on the Black Market Peso Exchange in which the Curacao-based business operated as a currency exchanger for narcotics traffickers. (Antilliaans Dagblad)

Aruba – MoJ Dowers Starts Human Smuggling Investigation

MoJ Arthur Dowers announced his department has started a human smuggling investigation at the Aruba port. Dowers believes the Colombian fruit vessels owners are involved in smuggling illegal immigrants into Aruba. (Antilliaans Dagblad)

Aruba – De Meza: ‘PdVSA Will Not Take-Over Valero Refinery’

Finance, Utilities, Communication and Energy Minister Mike de Meza said the US-owned Valero-refinery will probably not have a strategic partner by September contrary to earlier reports of a possible take-over by the Venezuelan state-owned company PdVSA. Valero is still looking for a strategic partner before the September re-start. De Meza said that negotiations with Canadian oil company Pacific Rubiales are in an advanced stage. “Valero representatives said that conversations with PetroChina have stalled”, De Meza said. (Amigoe)

Antilles – Several Government Entities To Be Monitored By Dutch

The St. Maarten Police Corps, Federal Detectives Department, Pointe Blanche Prison, Immigration Department and the Census Office and the Curaçao Police Force development plan and the improvement plan of the Bon Futuro Prison will be monitored by the Kingdom Government, because those tasks will not be completed before the islands attain their semi-autonomous status within the Kingdom on 10-10-10. These decisions were reportedly taken during a political Kingdom partners meeting, yesterday. (Various media)

Curacao – U.S. Authorities After \$500K E-mail Scam Dollars

U.S. authorities are going after more than \$496,000 of stolen cash they say is sitting in banks in Curacao.

The U.S. Justice Department’s effort to recover the money through a recently-filed civil forfeiture order offers a window into the common so-called “Nigerian e-mail scams”. This time, court papers say, the swindlers even stole the identity of a nun doing missionary work in Brazil, forging her signature and opening bank accounts in her name to help cover up their involvement.

According to court records: Beginning in late 2005, about 48 victims, most from the U.S., got a letter or e-mail that pronounced they had come upon a windfall. Some used the

plane crash ruse; others explained that the letter reader was “beneficiary to a large inheritance abroad.”

One key figure in the conspiracy, court records state, was a Nigerian native named Ekema Johnny Okonkwo. He has been convicted in the Netherlands for fraud and money laundering.

One Chicago woman was told she had come into \$32 million. The woman sent cash for sham legal fees, indemnity fees and change of address fees. By the time she realized she had been scammed, she had wired more than \$50,000 to banks in Germany, Curacao and the United Kingdom. In all, the records state, victims sent about \$2 million. (La Prensa)

Curacao – Venezuelan Tax-Haven Restrictions Have No Local Impact

Former State Secretary of Finance Alex Rosaria said the latest Venezuelan banking restrictions should not affect businesses in Curacao and that Curacao is not blacklisted by the Venezuelan Banks & Financial Institutions Supervisor (Sudeban). Sudeban, after consultation with the Central Bank of Venezuela, has issued a prohibition on transactions between banks or other financial institutions, and entities located in jurisdictions with low tax regimes, where there is "inadequate financial supervision and strong bank secrecy protection". According to Sudeban, the measures involve the complete prohibition of trade or financial transactions with offshore operators as determined by Sudeban or the maintenance of balances on accounts with banks in such offshore jurisdictions. Sudeban claims it is exercising its role of ensuring the proper functioning of financial institutions to mitigate risks that may cause economic instability. (La Prensa)

Curacao – Precautionary Emergency Landing USFOL Aircraft

The emergency landing of a USFOL E-3 aircraft on Sunday night after the crew sensed fuel fumes in the cockpit was merely precautionary. “As with anything we do safety is paramount so the decision was made to be safe and return the aircraft to the USFOL as soon as possible,” Lt.Col. Brian Bell said.

Antilles\Aruba – Change of Command at Dutch Naval Forces Caribbean

Various dignitaries from the Netherlands and the U.S. are expected to attend the change of command ceremony for the Commanding Officer of the Dutch naval forces in the Caribbean on Thursday when Commodore Peter Lenselink will hand over command of the Coast Guard Netherlands Antilles and Aruba and Taskforce CTG 4.4 to Brigadier-General Dick Swijgman. (Antilliaans Dagblad)

Antilles – 10-10-10 in Jeopardy?

The Dutch First Chamber of Parliament is reportedly seriously considering postponing their scheduled July 6 debate, concerning the dismantling of the Netherlands Antilles, after the Curacao Island parliament did not pass the mandatory legislation for the new Curacao Constitution; Island parliament elections (Aug. 27?) on Curacao are now inevitable. The Dutch Chamber’s first available option for a debate is September 14, five days after the scheduled final Kingdom Round Table Conference. (Various media)

Aruba – Minister Winklaar: “Aruba Now a UNICEF Member Country”

Aruban Minister of Economic Affairs, Social Affairs and Culture, Michelle Hooyboer-Winklaar announced that on June 18, Aruba became the 36th UNICEF country in Latin America and the Caribbean. UNICEF is the leading advocate for children’s rights, active in 190 countries through country programs and National Committees. (Various media)

Curacao - August 27 Possible Date for Early Elections

Coalition partners in the Curaçao Island Government have identified August 27 as the most feasible date for early elections. Early elections became necessary after the draft Constitution for the new Country Curaçao did not pass an important local hurdle early last week, when it fell two votes short of the required two-thirds majority. The draft Constitution will be tabled again in the Island Council for approval, when it will only require a simple majority for adoption. However, the present Island Council must be dissolved first, followed by early Island Council elections and the formation of a new coalition (Amigoe, Antilliaans Dagblad, Daily Herald).

St. Maarten - Human Smuggler Gets 52 Months on Appeal

On June 24 the Appeals Court followed the Solicitor General’s request to quash the ruling of the Court of First Instance and sentenced Terrence Williams (47) of St. Kitts to 52 months prison for his involvement in the *Ajada* case, named after the boat which carried 21-25 illegal migrants from St. Maarten to the U.S. Virgin Islands in January 2009. The boat ran aground near Tortola, resulting in 8-12 persons missing and presumed drowned. Williams had been convicted by the Court of First Instance to 34 months, six of which were suspended, with two years’ probation, in September 2009. The Public Prosecutor’s Office had launched the appeal because it considered the initial sentence too low (Daily Herald).

“The Weekly Press Summary is a compilation of stories running in the Netherlands Antilles and Aruban press that is intended to alert readers about items of interest to them. There is no interpretation or verification of the facts contained therein.”